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United Nations

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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Supplement No. 35 (A/49/35*)

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

15 November 1994

Sir,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 5 of its resolution 48/158 A of 20 December 1993.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Kéba Birane CISSÉ
Chairman of the Committee on the
Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People

His Excellency
Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali
Secretary-General of the United Nations

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, in which the Assembly requested the Committee to consider and recommend to it a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights as recognized by the Assembly in resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974. During the reporting period the Committee continued to be composed of 23 Member States, as follows: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Cyprus, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Yugoslavia. 1/

2. The recommendations made by the Committee in its first report to the General Assembly 2/ were endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 31/20 of 24 November 1976 as a basis for the solution of the question of Palestine. In its subsequent reports 3/ the Committee has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the following essential principles: the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination. In its 1993 report to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session, 4/ the Committee welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements on 13 September 1993 in Washington, D.C. (A/48/486-S/26560, annex) by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as an important step towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Committee stated that it would continue to strengthen its efforts to promote the attainment of those rights and the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles and mobilize international assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period. Each year, the Assembly has endorsed the Committee's recommendations with overwhelming support and has renewed its mandate and expanded it as necessary.

3. During the year under review, the Committee noted with great hope the further development of the peace process initiated at Madrid in October 1991, despite the repeated delays and the violent incidents in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The Committee welcomed the signing at Cairo on 4 May 1994 of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area and the subsequent withdrawal of Israeli troops from those areas, the deployment of Palestinian police, the return of Mr. Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, and other Palestinian leaders to Gaza, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the partial release of prisoners by Israel (see A/49/180-S/1994/727, annex). The Committee was also pleased to note the signing of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities at Erez on 29 August 1994. The Committee considered that these were steps of major significance in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and expressed the hope that negotiations would proceed speedily and successfully for its full implementation. The Committee also noted the conclusion of the Washington Declaration on 25 July 1994 by Israel and Jordan (A/49/300-S/1994/939, annex) and the signing of the Treaty of Peace between the State of Israel and the

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on 26 October 1994, and expressed the hope that it would lead to rapid progress in the negotiations with the other parties to the conflict.

4. Notwithstanding these encouraging developments, the Committee remained greatly concerned at the continuation of repressive activities by Israeli troops and attacks by armed settlers, exemplified most tragically by the massacre of Palestinian worshippers at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron in February 1994. The Committee reaffirmed that Israel's continuing occupation constituted the principal obstacle to the achievement of peace. The Committee also expressed concern at the continued Israeli policy of settlement and land confiscation and stressed that during the transitional period Israel remains duty-bound, as the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention, 5/ to respect the provisions of the Convention in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including Jerusalem.

5. The Committee affirmed once again the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to the question of Palestine until it was resolved in all its aspects. It stressed the need for the full engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and in the process of building the Palestinian Authority as well as in providing broad assistance to the Palestinian people in all needed fields. Expressing concern over the deteriorating economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the overwhelming problems of poverty, unemployment and ruined infrastructure faced by the Palestinian Authority, the Committee called for the urgent provision of international assistance to help build the foundations for peace.

6. The Committee firmly believes that as the organ of the General Assembly dealing with the question of Palestine, it can make a valuable and positive contribution to United Nations endeavours during the transitional period by continuing to mobilize international opinion and action for its successful outcome and in support of the Palestinian people until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is achieved. The Committee intends to continue to devote a major part of its programme of work to this objective.

II. MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

7. The mandate of the Committee for the year 1994 is contained in paragraphs 2 to 6 of General Assembly resolution 48/158 A of 20 December 1993, in which the Assembly:

(a) Considered that the Committee could make a valuable and positive contribution to international efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and to mobilize international support and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period, endorsed the Committee's recommendations and requested it to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine, and to report and make suggestions to the Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate;

(b) Authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it might consider appropriate and necessary in light of developments, to give special emphasis to the need to mobilize support and assistance for the Palestinian people and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session and thereafter;

(c) Requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation to non-governmental organizations in their contribution towards heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and promoting support and assistance to meet the needs of the Palestinian people, and to take the necessary steps to involve additional non-governmental organizations in its work.

8. In its resolution 48/158 B, also of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat with the resources required, including the continuing development of the computer-based information system on the question of Palestine, and to ensure that it continues to discharge the tasks detailed in the pertinent Assembly resolutions, in consultation with the Committee and under its guidance.

9. In its resolution 48/158 C, of 20 December 1994, the General Assembly requested the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as might be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme on the question of Palestine for the biennium 1994-1995, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America.

10. In carrying out its programme of work, the Committee also took into account General Assembly resolution 48/158 D of 20 December 1993 in which the Assembly reaffirmed the need to achieve a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects. The Assembly expressed its support for the ongoing peace process, which had begun at Madrid, and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, and expressed the hope that the process would lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The Assembly stressed the need for the United Nations to play a more active and expanded role in the current peace process and in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. It urged Member States to provide economic and

technical assistance to the Palestinian people. The Assembly also stressed the upcoming negotiations on the final settlement, and reaffirmed a number of principles for the achievement of a final settlement and comprehensive peace.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. Election of officers

11. At its 204th meeting, on 27 January 1994, the Committee re-elected Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal) as Chairman, Mr. Fernando Remirez de Estenoz Barciela (Cuba) and Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan) as Vice-Chairmen and Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta) as Rapporteur.

12. At its 205th meeting, on 23 March 1994, the Committee adopted its programme of work for 1994 in implementation of its mandate.

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

13. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members of the United Nations and Permanent Observers to the United Nations desiring to participate in the work of the Committee as observers were welcome to do so. Accordingly, in a letter dated 18 April 1994, the Chairman of the Committee informed the Secretary-General, who subsequently transmitted the letter, on 27 April 1994, to the States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies and to intergovernmental organizations. In accordance with established practice, the Committee also invited Palestine, represented by the PLO, to participate in the work of the Committee as an observer, to attend all its meetings and to make observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee.

14. In 1994, the Committee again welcomed as observers all the States and organizations that had participated in its work in the preceding year. 6/

C. Re-establishment of the Working Group

15. At its 204th meeting, the Committee re-established its Working Group in order to assist in the preparation and expedition of the work of the Committee on the understanding that any Committee member or observer could participate in its deliberations. 7/ The Working Group was constituted as before under the chairmanship of Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta) and Mrs. Mitra Vasisht (India) as Vice-Chairman.

IV. REVIEW OF THE SITUATION RELATING TO THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE AND EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT THE COMMITTEE'S MANDATE

16. In accordance with its mandate, the Committee continued to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine in the light of the new significant developments that have taken place and to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Committee endeavoured to contribute to international efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and to mobilize international support and assistance to the Palestinian people.

17. The Committee noted the signing by Israel and the PLO, as the representative of the Palestinian people, of a series of important bilateral agreements in implementation of the Declaration of Principles. In the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the PLO, Representing the Palestinian People, of 29 April 1994, the parties considered the economic domain as one of the important factors in their relations with a view to enhancing their interest in the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. The parties undertook to cooperate in that field in order to establish a sound economic base for those relations, to be governed by the principles of mutual respect of each other's economic interests, reciprocity, equity and fairness. The Protocol laid the groundwork for strengthening the economic base of the Palestinian side and for its exercising its right of economic decision-making in accordance with its own development plan and priorities. The Protocol was subsequently incorporated into the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. 5/

18. On 27 May 1994, the Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation and the United States of America to the United Nations, as well as the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine, transmitted the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, with its annexes and maps, to the Secretary-General. In the Agreement the parties reaffirmed their determination to live in peaceful coexistence, mutual dignity and security, while recognizing their mutual legitimate and political rights; and they reaffirmed their desire to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement through the agreed political process and their adherence to the mutual recognition and commitments of 9 September 1993. They reaffirmed their understanding that the interim self-government arrangements contained in the Agreement were an integral part of the whole peace process and that the negotiations on the permanent status would lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 and 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973. They expressed their desire to put into effect the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, and agreed on a number of arrangements regarding the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. These included the scheduled withdrawal of Israeli military forces, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the transfer to it of various areas of authority specified in the Agreement, arrangements for security and public order, including the establishment of a strong Palestinian police force, provisions for safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area and for the international crossings at the Egyptian and Jordanian borders, as well as confidence-building measures, in particular the release by Israel of 5,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, and other provisions for cooperation between Israel and the PLO.

19. The Committee noted with satisfaction that the nature of the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip had dramatically changed as the agreement for the transfer of authority had begun to be implemented. As at 18 May 1994, the Israeli occupying forces had completed their withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, home to almost 1 million Palestinians. An estimated 4,000 to 4,500 Israeli soldiers remained in the Gaza Strip in the areas of Israeli settlements, military installations and in security zones. The Committee noted reports that 6,000 to 7,000 Palestinian police had been deployed as of early September 1994, many of them former exiles. The Committee was pleased at reports that the transfer of internal security arrangements had had an immediate positive effect on the safety of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and that the number of casualties had dropped substantially.

20. The Committee welcomed the return of Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, to the Gaza Strip to assume the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, and noted with satisfaction that a number of other well-known Palestinian leaders and longstanding deportees had been allowed to return. The Committee noted that the popular reception they had received reflected the popular support for the peace process and the Palestinian leadership. The Committee noted that the Palestinian Authority had been established and was functioning in a normal manner and was increasing its activities and programmes on a daily basis, and it sought to involve the Authority's members in the meetings organized under the Committee's auspices.

21. The Committee further noted that, on 29 August 1994, Israel and the PLO had signed the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities regarding the West Bank. The Agreement provides for assumption by the Palestinian Authority of powers and responsibilities from the Israeli military Government and its Civil Administration in the following spheres: education and culture, health, social welfare, tourism, direct taxation and value added tax on local production. The parties also undertook to explore the possible expansion of the transfer of powers and responsibilities to other spheres. The Committee also noted the start of negotiations between Israel and the PLO on the issue of Palestinian elections and on the extension of the self-government arrangements to the rest of the West Bank.

22. While welcoming these positive developments and expressing the earnest hope that the agreements reached would be fully and effectively implemented, the Committee considered that the situation on the ground remained a matter of serious concern. In particular, the Committee was seriously concerned at the delay in the implementation of the agreements reached thus far, as well as the lack of compliance with the provisions of these agreements. The Committee was also alarmed by reports of the continued Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territory and in particular in and around Jerusalem.

23. The Committee was particularly alarmed by the killing, on 25 February 1994, by an armed Jewish settler of over 50 Palestinian worshippers at Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron. At least 100 Palestinians had been wounded as a result of that act. The Committee condemned the massacre in the strongest terms and expressed concern at reports of subsequent shootings by Israeli soldiers of Palestinian demonstrators elsewhere in the occupied territory. Following the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 904 (1994) of 18 March 1994, the Committee noted that, on 2 May 1994, a Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of a temporary international presence in Hebron had been agreed by Israel and the PLO at Copenhagen and signed by representatives of Denmark, Italy and Norway, the contributing countries. Observers were subsequently deployed in Hebron from May to July 1994. The Committee is of the view that resolution 904 (1994)

should be implemented in full, especially in the light of reports of continuing tension with the settlers in the area, including the uncovering and arrests of an underground network ready to carry out attacks against Palestinians.

24. Further, the Committee expressed concern at the fact that Israel was still holding thousands of Palestinian prisoners inside Israel, in violation of international law. While noting that in implementation of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area a number of Palestinian prisoners had been released, the Committee noted that this release was partial and conditional. The Committee was particularly alarmed by continued reports of systematic ill-treatment and torture by Israeli interrogators of Palestinian detainees. The Committee was also concerned at reports that, despite the redeployment from populated areas, Israeli patrols had carried out operations in the self-rule areas which had resulted in injury to Palestinians.

25. The Committee was particularly concerned by the continued settlement activities, by the Israeli Government's plans to expand a series of settlements in and around Jerusalem and in and around the town of Qalqilya in the West Bank, as well as by the large-scale housing development by the Israeli authorities in the area in and around Jerusalem. Also, declarations by Israeli officials with respect to the eastward expansion of the Jerusalem settlements remained a cause for serious concern of the Committee.

26. The Committee noted with concern the Israeli Government policy with regard to the closures of the city of Jerusalem and of the Gaza Strip, for security reasons, denying its inhabitants freedom of movement to other areas of the occupied territory, preventing worshippers from travelling to Jerusalem, denying patients essential medical care and preventing students from resuming their studies. The strict controls imposed on Palestinian workers from the Gaza Strip entering Israel, combined with catastrophic unemployment at home and the disastrous state of the economy after 27 years of occupation, had caused a dramatic increase in tension. The Committee deplored the use of lethal force by Israeli troops against Palestinian workers at the Erez checkpoint in July 1994 and warned that urgent measures were needed to improve Palestinian living conditions.

27. The Committee believes that for the Declaration of Principles and subsequent Israeli-Palestinian agreements to succeed, it is absolutely essential to promote economic and social development in the occupied Palestinian territory, and has repeatedly called for the urgent provision of the necessary funding by the international community. In this regard, the Committee noted the declaration issued at Oslo on 13 September 1994 by Mr. Yasser Arafat and the Foreign Ministers of Norway and Israel, in which a number of principles and needs were agreed to. The Committee welcomed the concerted effort undertaken by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system in providing the much-needed economic, technical, and development assistance to the Palestinian people. The Committee noted that agreements in that regard had been reached between the Palestine Liberation Organization, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other agencies.

28. The Committee also took note with appreciation of the important and timely steps taken in that regard by the Secretary-General, in particular the appointment of a Special Coordinator in the occupied territory, to act as focal point for all United Nations economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied territory, and to provide guidance to and facilitate coordination among the United Nations programmes and agencies

operating there. The Committee stressed that the activities of the United Nations as well as the activities of the Special Coordinator should normally be extended to the whole occupied territory, and expressed its readiness to contribute to those important endeavours. With that objective in mind, the Committee organized at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, in June 1994, a seminar on Palestinian trade and investment needs. It also continued to address related issues in the various meetings of non-governmental organizations organized under its auspices.

V. ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/158 A

1. Reaction to developments affecting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people

Communication to the Secretary-General

29. In a letter dated 25 February 1994, the Chairman of the Committee drew the attention of the Secretary-General to the massacre of Palestinian worshippers by an Israeli settler at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron (A/48/883-S/1994/220).

Action taken within the Security Council

30. The Chairman also participated in the meeting of the Security Council on this issue convened at the request of the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations, on behalf of the members of the Arab Group of States, and the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, on behalf of the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. 8/

31. In his statement on behalf of the Committee at the 3342nd meeting, on 2 March 1994, the Chairman strongly condemned the massacre in Hebron. He stated that the Committee wished to remind the international community that as long as Israeli forces occupy the Palestinian territory, Israel bore full responsibility for the protection of Palestinians, as the occupying Power, in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. The Committee, therefore, fully supported the Palestinian requests for an international presence to be established in the occupied territory and for measures aimed at disarming the settlers and limiting their presence and activities in Palestinian towns and villages. The Committee urged the Security Council to take the necessary measures in that regard.

32. At its 3351st meeting, on 18 March 1994, the Security Council, without a vote, adopted resolution 904 (1994), in which, inter alia, it strongly condemned the massacre in Hebron and its aftermath which took the lives of more than 50 Palestinian civilians and injured several hundred others; called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to continue to take and implement measures, including, inter alia, confiscation of arms, with the aim of preventing illegal acts of violence by Israeli settlers; called for measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territory, including, inter alia, a temporary international or foreign presence, which was provided for in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, within the context of the ongoing peace process; requested the co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States of America and the Russian Federation, to continue their efforts to invigorate the peace process, and to undertake the necessary support for the implementation of the above-mentioned measures; reaffirmed its support for the peace process currently under way, and called for the implementation of the Declaration of Principles without delay.

2. Attendance at international conferences and meetings

33. In accordance with its mandate, the Committee was represented by its Chairman at the following international meetings during the period since its previous report to the General Assembly:

(a) Conference on the Prospects for an Arab-Israeli Peace, organized by the Wilton Park Conferences at Steyning, West Sussex, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from 3 to 7 May 1994;

(b) Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries held at Cairo from 31 May to 3 June 1994;

(c) Sixtieth ordinary session of the Council of Ministers and the thirtieth session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity held at Tunis from 6 to 11 and 13 to 15 June 1994, respectively.

3. Action taken by United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations

34. The Committee continued to follow with great interest the activities of United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations relating to the question of Palestine. The Committee noted especially the support of the international community for the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and for its implementation, as important steps towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in accordance with United Nations resolutions. The Committee also noted the great concern about the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the sense of urgency with which the international community had addressed the need to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in the difficult transition period ahead. The Committee took particular note of the following documents:

(a) Communiqué issued at the meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session, held at United Nations Headquarters on 4 October 1993 (A/48/484-S/26552, annex, para. 3);

(b) Declaration of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 adopted at its seventeenth annual meeting, held in New York on 5 October 1993 (A/48/485, annex, paras. 74 and 75);

(c) Communiqué adopted at the meeting of the Heads of Government of the Countries of the Commonwealth, held at Limassol, Cyprus, from 21 to 25 October 1993 (A/48/564, annex);

(d) Final Communiqué adopted by the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its fourteenth session, held at Riyadh from 20 to 22 December 1993 (A/49/56-S/26926, annex);

(e) Resolutions CM/Res.1491 (LIX) on the situation in the Middle East and CM/Res.1492 (LIX) on the Palestine question, adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its fifty-ninth ordinary session, held at Addis Ababa from 31 January to 4 February 1994;

(f) Commission on Human Rights resolutions 1994/1 to 1994/5 of 18 February 1994; 9/

(g) Statement issued on 25 February 1994 by the President of the Sixth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (A/48/890-S/1994/242, annex);

(h) Statement adopted by the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in New York on 25 February 1994; 8/

(i) Resolution No. 5362 adopted by the League of Arab States at its emergency meeting, held at Cairo on 27 February 1994, concerning the Israeli massacre of Palestinians in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron; 10/

(j) Declaration issued on 28 February 1994 by the European Union on the events in Hebron (A/48/886-S/1994/231, annex);

(k) Communiqué of the Committee on Palestine of the non-aligned movement adopted on 1 March 1994 in New York; 11/

(l) Statement adopted by the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in New York on 7 March 1994, regarding the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory; 12/

(m) Statement issued by the Arab Group on 25 March 1994 in New York on the voting on Security Council resolution 904 (1994) (A/48/910-S/1994/353);

(n) Resolution 5366 (CI) of 27 March 1994 on the situation in the City of Jerusalem, adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at its one hundred and first regular session, held at Cairo (A/48/923-S/1994/403, annex);

(o) Communiqué issued at Riyadh on 3 April 1994 by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (A/49/125-S/1994/434, annex);

(p) Decision 1994/R.2/7 of 29 April 1994 on assistance to Palestinian children and women adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund at its second regular session, held in New York; 13/

(q) Resolution WHA47.30 of 12 May 1994 adopted by the forty-seventh World Health Assembly on health conditions of the Arab populations in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine;

(r) Final document adopted at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries held at Cairo from 31 May to 3 June 1994 (A/49/287-S/1994/894, annex);

(s) Resolutions CM/Res.1523 (LX) and CM/Res.1522 (LX) adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its sixtieth ordinary session, held at Tunis from 6 to 11 June 1994;

(t) Economic and Social Council resolutions 1994/29 of 27 July 1994 and 1994/44 and 1994/45 of 29 July 1994;

(u) Declaration by the European Union issued on 11 July 1994 concerning the visit by Chairman Arafat to the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area (A/49/230-S/1994/822, annex);

(v) Concluding observations adopted by the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its forty-fifth session, held at Geneva from 1 to 19 August 1994 (CERD/C/45/Misc.14/Rev.1);

(w) Resolution adopted by the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities at its forty-sixth session, held at Geneva from 1 to 26 August 1994 (1994/13);

(x) Resolution adopted at the seventh extraordinary session of the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Conference, held at Islamabad from 7 to 9 September 1994 (A/49/448, annex II);

(y) Final Communiqué issued by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its fifty-second ordinary session, held at Riyadh on 17 September 1994 (A/49/412-S/1994/1078, annex);

(z) Statement issued on 29 September 1994 by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the five permanent members of the Security Council (S/1994/1122, annex);

(aa) Declaration adopted at the eighteenth annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77, held in New York on 30 September 1994 (A/49/462, annex);

(bb) Declaration adopted at the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit, held at Casablanca, Morocco, from 30 October to 1 November 1994 (A/49/645, annex).

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 48/158 A and B

35. In its programme of work for the year 1994, the Committee decided to continue organizing regional seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations and preparing studies and publications in accordance with existing mandates and budgetary provisions. The Committee, as in the past, decided to invite Palestinian and Israeli personalities to participate in all events organized under its auspices with a view to promoting a constructive debate, mutual understanding and a concrete and action-oriented analysis of the most important issues relating to the question of Palestine and the peace process.

36. The Committee considered that the following priority tasks required immediate and sustained attention in its programme of work for 1994:

(a) Promoting support for the ongoing peace process and for the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, and following closely the developments and monitoring the situation on the ground, in order to promote the effective implementation of the agreements reached and the full realization of Palestinian rights;

(b) Promoting intensified assistance to the Palestinian people by the United Nations system as a whole, as well as other donors, for immediate relief and for nation-building;

(c) Encouraging constructive consideration and debate of the major issues to be negotiated at a later stage with a view to promoting a final settlement

based on international legitimacy in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

37. In view of the massacre that was committed on 25 February 1994 against Palestinian worshippers in the Ibrahimi Mosque at Hebron, the Committee decided to intensify its efforts to promote international action to provide for the protection of Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. In this regard, the Committee also considered that the full implementation of Security Council resolution 904 (1994) would be an important step in that direction.

1. Seminars

38. Regional seminars in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean were included in the calendar of meetings to be organized under the auspices of the Committee in the year under review. The Committee acknowledged with appreciation the offer of the Government of Brazil to host the Latin American and Caribbean seminar, together with a symposium of non-governmental organizations, in the first quarter of 1995.

39. The Committee decided to devote its Seminar in the European region to the theme "Palestinian trade and investment needs", in accordance with its mandate to mobilize international support and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period, and taking into consideration the suggestion made by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/213 of 21 December 1993, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people". The seminar was held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 20 to 22 June 1994.

40. The Committee was represented by a delegation comprising H.E. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation and Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee, who served as Chairman and Rapporteur of the Seminar, respectively; and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations).

41. The seminar was attended by 16 experts, representatives of 39 Governments, nine organizations of the United Nations system, as well as representatives from 10 non-governmental organizations. A delegation of Palestine and a representative of the League of Arab States also took part in the seminar.

42. The programme for the seminar began with a plenary session on the theme "Building a Palestinian economy - challenges and prospects". Statements were made by donor countries and other Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and organizations of the United Nations system.

43. Subsequently, three round-table discussions, moderated by experts, were conducted, as follows:

(a) "Laying the foundation for Palestinian economic development": Ms. Irene Jillson, President of Policy Research Inc. of Bethesda, Maryland, United States of America (Moderator); Mr. Hisham Awartani, Professor, Al-Najah University; Mr. George Abed, Economist and senior staff member, International Monetary Fund (IMF); Mr. Kamal Kassouneh, entrepreneur from Jerusalem; Mr. Antoine Zahlan, member of the Palestine Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction; and Mr. Tayseer Abdel Jaber, Director of the Arab Consulting Centre at Amman, Jordan.

(b) "Investment for development: Palestinian needs and policy options": Mr. George Abed, Economist and senior staff member, IMF (Moderator); Mr. Ibrahim Dakkak, member of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction; Ms. I. Jillson, President of Policy Research Inc. of Bethesda, Maryland; Ms. Hind Salman, Associate Professor at Bethlehem University; Mr. Bassim Khoury, owner of a West Bank pharmaceutical company; Mr. Hussam Hijjawi, member of the Nablus Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Stephen Day, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding and Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine; and Mr. Simcha Bahiri, Israel-Palestine Centre for Research and Information.

(c) "Trade for development: Palestinian needs and policy options": Mr. Tayseer Abdel Jaber, Director for the Arab Consulting Centre at Amman (Moderator); Mr. Hazem el Beblawi, Chairman of the Export Development Bank of Egypt; Mr. Ala'edeen Shawa, Director of the Development Resource Centre, Gaza; and Mr. Ezra Sadan, Agricultural Research Organization, Israel.

44. Participants in the seminar engaged in an analysis and discussion of the recent developments and the prospects for peace in the area, as well as of the current economic situation and the imperative necessity of its rapid amelioration in order to provide a solid foundation for peace efforts. The experts gave a serious analysis of current and future needs in the fields of trade and investment and constructive proposals were made to meet the current emergency situation and to promote sustainable development of the Palestinian economy during and after the transitional period. The final report of the Seminar was submitted to the President of the Economic and Social Council in a letter from the Chairman of the Committee for circulation to the members. 14/ It has also been issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

2. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations

45. In accordance with its mandate under General Assembly resolution 48/158 A, the Committee continued to cooperate and expand contacts with interested non-governmental organizations. During 1994, a regional non-governmental organization symposium for North America and a combined meeting for European and international non-governmental organizations were held. The Committee noted that non-governmental organizations had continued their efforts to provide assistance and support to the Palestinian people in light of the new situation following signing of the Declaration of Principles and Interim Self-Government Arrangements and subsequent agreements. The Committee affirmed the importance of the contribution by non-governmental organizations to international efforts on behalf of the Palestinian people and considered that their support would continue to be essential during the transitional period.

46. The Eleventh United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held at Toronto, Canada, from 6 to 8 July 1994 in cooperation with the North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine and in accordance with a programme elaborated in consultation with it at a preparatory meeting held in New York on 31 January and 1 February 1994. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Government of Canada for having provided the venue for the Symposium and for its active participation in its deliberations.

47. The Committee was represented by a delegation comprising Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation; Mr. Ravan Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman of the Committee;

Mr. Fernando Remirez de Estenoz Barciela (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations). The Government of Canada was represented by Mr. Mac Harb, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade; other high-level officials participated in the Symposium deliberations.

48. The Symposium was attended by representatives of 58 non-governmental organizations and 15 Governments. In four plenary sessions, 19 experts presented papers and statements on the reconstruction and nation-building process during the transition period in the light of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and subsequent agreements. Six workshops were held with twenty experts discussing issues relevant to the question of Palestine.

49. The theme of the Symposium was "Palestine - towards a just and lasting peace: focus on support by non-governmental organizations for cooperation and development". The expert panels were as follows:

(a) "The Declaration of Principles: taking stock of the situation": Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations; Mr. Mervyn Dymally, retired United States Congressman; and Mr. Aaron Back, B'Tselem, Israeli Centre for Human Rights In the Occupied Territories;

(b) "The Declaration of Principles: United Nations involvement and the North American non-governmental organization movement": Mr. Jawad Squili, Chairman of the Board, Centre d'études arabes pour le développement; Mr. Anis Al-Qaq, Director, Health Services Council and Chairman of the Palestinian Theatre; Ms. Phyllis Bennis, Journalist; and Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine;

(c) (i) "Strengthening civil and social structures": Mr. Eyad El Sarraj, Director, Gaza Community Mental Health Programme; Ms. Zahira Kamal, Coordinator for Women's Affairs Technical Committee; and Mr. Norman Cook, Director of Non-Governmental Organizations, Canadian Partnership Branch, Canadian International Development Agency;

(ii) "Development and the United Nations system": Ms. Janice Abu Shakrah, Director of the Palestine Human Rights Information Centre, Jerusalem; and Ms. Zahira Kamal, Coordinator for Women's Affairs Technical Committee;

(d) "Looking ahead: key issues": Ms. Janice Abu Shakrah, Director, Palestine Human Rights Information Centre, Jerusalem; Ms. Sarah Kaminer, Planning Consultant for neighbourhood organizations in West and East Jerusalem; Mr. Naseer Aruri, Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, Massachusetts; and Mr. Marc Perron, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of External Relations of Canada.

50. The workshops addressed the following topics: economic development; health and educational needs; promoting coexistence (citizen to citizen diplomacy); defending human rights; working with the media; and the Palestinian women's experience in development.

51. The Symposium was marked by intensive and fruitful discussions and served as an occasion for non-governmental organizations in North America to coordinate

and intensify its efforts and activities aimed at assisting the Palestinian people in the political, social and economic spheres. At the final session, the participating non-governmental organizations elected a new Coordinating Committee for the North American region to follow up on the decisions taken and to assure cooperation with the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights.

52. The United Nations International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held as a combined event at Geneva from 29 August to 1 September 1993. The theme of the meeting was "Building on the Declaration of Principles towards the independent State of Palestine".

53. The Committee was represented by a delegation composed of Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of the delegation; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

54. The meeting was attended by the representatives of 100 non-governmental organizations, 15 of them as observers. It was also attended by 30 Governments, 8 United Nations agencies and bodies, 4 intergovernmental and other organizations, 5 non-governmental organization coordinating committees, a delegation of Palestine and 27 panelists and workshop leaders.

55. The programme for the meeting was formulated by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in consultation with the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine and the European Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine at a preparatory meeting held at Geneva on 21 and 22 February 1994.

56. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal) chaired the opening and closing sessions of the meeting. Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, read a message from the Secretary-General. Mr. Zehdi L. Terzi, Senior Advisor on International Organizations to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, made a statement on his behalf. Other opening statements were made by Mr. Stephen Day, Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine and Don Betz, Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine.

57. The following panelists made presentations in the six panels:

(a) "Implementation of the Declaration of Principles": Mr. Zehdi L. Terzi, Senior Advisor on International Organizations to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee for the PLO; Mr. Stephen Day, Director, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding and Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine; and Mr. Romesh Chandra, President of Honour of the World Peace Council;

(b) "Elements of the final Settlement":

(i) "Jerusalem": Mr. Ibrahim Shaaban, Director, Palestinian Housing Council;

(ii) "Refugees": Mr. Muhammad Hallaj, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Analysis on Palestine;

(iii) "Settlements": Mr. Khader Shkirat, Director, Land and Water Establishment, West Bank;

(c) (i) "The Palestinian people's reality today":

"In the occupied Palestinian Territory": Mrs. Maha Shawa, Economist, Head of the International Cooperation Division, Health Department, Palestinian Authority; Mr. Marai Abdelrahman, Secretary-General, Palestine Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations; and Mr. Victor M. Kashkoush, Director-General, Welfare Association;

(ii) a. "Israeli society and the peaceful settlement with the Palestinian People": Mr. Peretz Kidron, freelance journalist and writer;

b. "Role of the Israeli peace forces in support of the Palestinian people": Mr. Dan Leon, Managing Editor, Palestine Israel Journal;

c. "Arab societies in the Middle East and the Declaration of Principles": Mr. Nouri Abdul Razzak, Secretary-General, Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization;

(d) (i) "Social and Economic Development of Palestine": Mr. Samir Othman Houlaileh, Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction; and Mr. Ahmed Saad, economist, writer, researcher and manager of the Emil Tuma Institute (Haifa);

(ii) "The role of non-governmental organizations in the social and economic development of Palestine": Mr. Stephen Day, Executive Director of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding and Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine; Mr. Fritz Froehlich, Society for Austro-Arab Relations; Dr. Anis Al Qaq, Health Services Council, West Bank; and Mr. Bruce Stanley, representative, Association for International Development Agencies;

(e) "The role of non-governmental organizations in supporting the work of the United Nations": Dr. Anis Al Qaq, Health Services Council, West Bank; Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman, North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine; Mrs. Elaine Hesse Steel, Director, World Young Women's Christian Association (Geneva); Mrs. Maria Gazi, Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity; and Mr. Don Betz, Chairman, International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine.

(f) "Campaigning for Palestinian National and Human Rights: how to campaign; and evaluation of the campaign on the release of Palestinian prisoners, re-launching of the campaigns on refugees, rights of return, and settlements in the light of recent developments": Mrs. Janice Abu Shakrah, Director, Palestine Human Rights Information Centre, Jerusalem; Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman, North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine; and Mr. Ilan Halevi, Special Advisor to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO.

58. The following topics were discussed in the workshops: health, women, and education.

59. The non-governmental organizations participating in the meeting adopted a final communiqué in which they expressed the view that the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements was a turning-point opening a new chapter in Middle East relations and an avenue to a just and lasting peace. They also stated that the unequivocal support of the non-governmental organizations for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions remained at the centre of the non-governmental organizations' commitment. Further, they considered that the United Nations continues to have a role in reaching a negotiated settlement on the question of Palestine and is the most appropriate body that could guarantee a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

60. The non-governmental organizations noted that the information presented at the meeting and the discussion that followed confirmed that the peace process was in its initial stages. The implementation of the initial stages of the Palestinian interim self-government was an important achievement, but must not be permitted to obscure the reality that, during the transitional period, Israel, as the occupying power, remained obligated to observe the Geneva Conventions until such time as the Palestinian people achieved full sovereignty.

61. They considered that although resolution of the questions related to Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and the right of return had been deferred to the permanent status negotiations, their importance demanded a clear and constant affirmation from the non-governmental organization movement. Of immediate and major concern to them was the continued Israeli imprisonment of Palestinian political prisoners and detainees. The non-governmental organizations called for their unconditional release in compliance with the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area signed at Cairo.

62. They confirmed that under occupation, local and international non-governmental organizations had played crucial roles in the development of the Palestinian economy and society. They anticipated that non-governmental organizations would continue to play those roles and that support should be provided based upon their competence and quality of service. They sought ways to increase the involvement of non-governmental organizations, including those involved in economic and social development and in humanitarian service and looked forward to, and encouraged cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the Palestinian Authority.

63. In consultations between the representatives of the international and European coordinating committees for non-governmental organizations and the delegation of the Committee, it was agreed that a "task force" of seven to nine representatives would be appointed from within the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine in order to ensure more cost-effective and incisive cooperation between the non-governmental organization coordinating structures, the Committee and the Division.

64. In order to encourage a wider and more active participation by non-governmental organizations in the activities and meetings under its auspices, in particular those whose work encompasses humanitarian ends and programmes, including development, benefiting the Palestinian people, the

Committee, at its 206th meeting, established a revised set of criteria for such participation.

3. Research, monitoring and publications

65. The Committee noted with appreciation that the Division for Palestinian Rights, in accordance with its mandate, continued to respond to information requests and to prepare and disseminate the following publications:

(a) Monthly bulletins covering action by the Committee, other United Nations organs, organizations and agencies, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with the question of Palestine;

(b) Monthly chronological review of events relating to the question of Palestine, as reflected in the Arabic, English and Hebrew media, for the use of the Committee;

(c) Reports of seminars and non-governmental organization meetings;

(d) Periodic compilations of statements, declarations, documents and other material generated by the peace process;

(e) A compilation of the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine adopted in 1993); 15/

(f) A special bulletin on the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 1993.

66. The Committee also noted that the Division continued its programme of research and preparation of studies and information notes, in close cooperation with the Bureau of the Committee.

4. United Nations information system on the question of Palestine

67. The Committee noted that the Division, in cooperation with relevant technical services of the Secretariat, had completed the initial stage of the establishment of a United Nations computer-based information system on the question of Palestine (UNISPAL), as requested by the Committee and endorsed by the General Assembly. The Committee noted that on a trial basis, Committee members and observers and other relevant users within the United Nations Secretariat and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as coordinating committees for non-governmental organizations, had been given access through a Bulletin Board Service, to selected United Nations documents and reports on the question of Palestine, both current and historical. The Committee stressed the importance and usefulness of UNISPAL for the work of the Committee and of the United Nations, as well as of other members of the international community, and called for intensified efforts to advance towards full operation of the system and its further expansion as needed.

5. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

68. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed on 29 November 1993 at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day had also been observed in 1993 in many other cities throughout the world. Details on the observance are contained in the special bulletin issued by the Division.

69. On the occasion of the observance of the Day an exhibit of Palestinian traditional costumes, entitled "Palestine: a glimpse of the past, an inspiration for the future" was provided by the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations and presented under the auspices of the Committee.

VI. ACTION TAKEN BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 48/158 C

70. The Department of Public Information continued to provide press coverage of all meetings of United Nations bodies dealing with Palestinian issues, including the Security Council and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and all meetings, seminars and symposia of the latter body convened away from Headquarters. Additional press releases were issued containing the texts of the Secretary-General's statements relating to the question of Palestine and on the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). A total of 90 press releases were issued on the subject in English and French.

71. The Department cooperated at United Nations Headquarters with the Division for Palestinian Rights in media promotion and other arrangements for the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The event was covered by a broad spectrum of media, including CNN, World Television News, Reuters, American Middle Eastern Television, United Press International and publications including Academic File, American Craft and Magazine Antiques.

72. The quarterly magazine UN Chronicle continued to publish stories relating to Palestinian issues, including Security Council actions and results of special meetings and seminars. Special coverage in 1994 reflected the historic agreements on self-government.

73. The Department's Public Inquiries Unit responded to 165 requests for information on the Middle East and/or the question of Palestine in the year under review. The Group Programmes Unit arranged a total of 15 briefing programmes by Secretariat officials during the same period on the question of Palestine. In addition, the subject was included in the presentation made to visitors taking guided tours of United Nations Headquarters.

74. The Department continued to distribute its publications, including Promoting a Culture for Peace in the Middle East: An Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue, based on the proceedings of the International Encounter for Journalists on the Question of Palestine, organized by the Department in London in June 1993, as well as the new, revised edition of The United Nations and the Question of Palestine, published in October 1994. The Department also undertook the preparation of a new publication based on the proceedings of the International Encounter for Journalists on the Question of Palestine, on the subject "Prerequisites for peace in the Middle East", held at Elsinore, Denmark, from 15 to 17 June 1994, and distributed a "United Nations focus" feature on the same topic.

75. In the first seven months of the year the Dissemination and Communications Unit of the Department's Information Centres Service distributed electronically 17 materials on the Palestine issue to 114 recipients around the world, including Internet and four other public electronic networks as well as Reuters and the Federal News Service agencies. The materials were comprised of the Secretary-General's statements and messages, press releases on encounters, seminars and symposia in Elsinore, Paris, Toronto, etc., and were disseminated in the English and Arabic languages. During the same period, the Unit distributed 11,267 copies of the Department's publications, such as Jerusalem: Visions of Reconciliation and other United Nations documents relating to the question of Palestine in Arabic, English, French, German,

Spanish and Russian, and to 750 recipients-redisseminators of the United Nations information.

76. A 30-minute historical documentary entitled Palestine 1890s to 1990s, based on a two-hour Point du Jour production, was produced by the Media Division of the Department and distributed in English and French versions to all United Nations information centres and services and UNDP libraries. Spanish and Arabic versions will be completed by November. Additionally, several UN in action pieces on topics such as water resource management, citrus processing and the Palestinian police force were videotaped during the fall.

77. The Radio and Video Service of the Department covered various aspects of the question of Palestine and related items in news and current affairs radio programmes in official and non-official languages. Some of the topics included the Israeli-Palestine accord, violation of human rights in the occupied territories, the massacre in Hebron, the Secretary-General's meeting with the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, summaries of the United Nations regional seminars and symposia of non-governmental organizations on the question of Palestine and the deteriorating economic and social situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In addition, the Service produced a number of feature programmes exclusively devoted to the question of Palestine, such as "Palestinian refugees: caring for them and planning for change", adapted into Arabic, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Kiswahili, Turkish and Urdu and distributed to more than 350 radio stations worldwide; "The situation of Palestinian women", also produced for world-wide distribution; and "International protection of Palestinian refugees" and "The Palestinian refugees and United Nations humanitarian assistance", produced in French. Five features, entitled "The Palestinian-Israeli agreement: is it a first step toward peace?", "Assistance to the Palestinian people", "Palestinian women and the right to self-determination", "The Palestinian refugees: future prospects" and "Will the Palestinians be protected at last?", were also produced in Arabic. World Chronicle, the 30-minute panel discussion video programme featured Timothy Rothermel, Director of the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He discussed issues crucial for economic development in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

78. The NGO Section held an expanded briefing for the non-governmental organization community entitled "The United Nations and the Middle East peace process", featuring presentations by Mr. Arie Tenne of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations, Mr. Muin Shreim of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations and Mr. Mame Balla Sy of the Permanent Mission of Senegal to the United Nations, representing the view of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Prior to the briefing, a 30-minute video of the Washington ceremonies was screened.

79. Coverage of United Nations activities related to the question of Palestine was provided on an ongoing basis by the global network of United Nations information centres. The centres produced and distributed newsletters, press releases and television news programmes and regularly briefed media representatives. The staff organized film screenings, gave lectures and translated and disseminated publications and posters produced both by the Department of Public Information and the Division for Palestinian Rights. The United Nations information centre in Paris helped organize the United Nations Seminar on Palestinian Trade and Investment Needs. The centres in London, Athens and Copenhagen provided full support services to the Department of Public Information for encounters on the question of Palestine. Many centres marked

the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People with special activities. These included distribution of background notes produced by the Department and United Nations publications; translation of the Department's materials into local languages (Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Italian); organizing special media seminars and student round-tables; placing relevant films produced by the Department and United Nations radio presentations on local television and radio programmes; providing radio and television interviews, and disseminating widely the statements of the Secretary-General on the question. Additionally, the centre at Manila, in cooperation with the Embassy of Palestine at Manila, promoted a national art competition on Palestinian rights. The centre at Athens helped to organize a round-table on "New perspectives of Palestinian people after the peace agreement". The centre at Jakarta hosted a week-long exhibition on the work of UNRWA. The centre at New Delhi organized a ceremony to commemorate the International Day. The centre at Rio de Janeiro participated in a television co-production on Peace in the Middle East. The centre at Rome helped to organize a seminar on "The occupied territories: economic cooperation and interdependence to build peace in the Middle East". The centre at Windhoek arranged for the question of Palestine to be discussed on a popular radio programme.

80. In cooperation with the Government of Denmark, the Department sponsored an International Encounter for Journalists on the Question of Palestine, held at Elsinore, Denmark, from 15 to 17 June 1994. The meeting brought together prominent Arabs, Israelis and Middle East experts to exchange views with a group of senior international media representatives on the Encounter's theme "Prerequisites to peace in the Middle East". Issues discussed included security, development, democratization and outstanding problems such as the status of Jerusalem and the future of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Some 130 people, including 26 members of the diplomatic corps, attended the meeting.

81. The Encounter was opened by Mr. Niels Helveg Petersen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark. The Palestinian and Israeli panellists were: Mr. Samir Abdallah, Chief of the Department of Economic Policies and Project Selection, Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction; Mr. Haider Abdel Shafi, President of the Red Crescent Society at Gaza; Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations; Mr. Mark Heller, Senior Research Associate, Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv; Mr. Yossi Katz, Member of the Israeli Knesset; Mr. Ron Pundik, Senior Fellow, Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Tel Aviv; and Mr. Emmanuel Sharon, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hapoalim Bank, Tel Aviv.

82. The Department sponsored a Fact-Finding News Mission for European and Japanese Journalists to the Middle East, which was organized in accordance with General Assembly resolutions on the question of Palestine. The primary goal of the Mission, which included visits to Tunis, Damascus and Amman, was to examine the momentum in support of the peace process in the Middle East. The journalists also investigated the economic and social needs of the Palestinian people. The group met with senior government officials, the leadership of the PLO and Palestinians living in refugee camps. The group of 15 journalists represented the following media organizations: Belga News Agency (Belgium); Berlingske Tidende (Denmark); Suomen Kuvalehti (Finland); Le Figaro (France); Die Zeit (Germany); Eleftherotypia (Greece); Il Messaggero (Italy); Japan Broadcast Corporation (NHK), Mainichi Shimbun, and Sankei Shimbun (Japan); Algemeen Dagblad (Netherlands); Arbeiderbladet (Norway); Radio Nacional de

España (Spain); Svenska Dagbladet (Sweden); and The Independent (United Kingdom).

83. The Department has begun preparations for a "Seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development", which it is sponsoring at Madrid from 29 to 31 March 1995. The seminar will be supported by, among others, the Spanish Foreign Ministry and UNESCO.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

84. Over a year has elapsed since the mutual recognition between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel and the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, which created a dramatic turning-point in the search for peace in the Middle East. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has welcomed these developments and expressed its commitment to support the Palestinian people and its leadership during the difficult transition process. The Committee congratulates the parties on the well-deserved recognition, through the Nobel Peace Prize, of their courageous efforts in the name of peace. The Committee is aware that the road to peace is still long and fraught with obstacles but is encouraged by the stated commitment of the parties to pursue negotiations despite repeated acts of violence aimed at derailing the peace process.

85. The Committee reaffirms that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached. The Committee reiterates that the involvement of the United Nations in the peace process, both as the guardian of international legitimacy and in the mobilization and provision of international assistance, is essential for the successful outcome of the peace efforts. As the organ of the General Assembly established to deal with the question of Palestine, the Committee believes that its own role continues to be useful and necessary during the transitional period and until a satisfactory final settlement is achieved.

86. The Committee reaffirms that such a settlement must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, in particular the right to self-determination. The Committee also insists that, during the interim period, Israel must recognize and respect its obligations as the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention. While remaining firm on this position of principle, the Committee has continued to make adjustments in its approach and programme of work in order to make a concrete contribution to promoting the implementation of the agreements reached and to mobilize international assistance to the Palestinian people. The Committee invites the General Assembly once again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate with overwhelming support.

87. The Committee wishes to express its great appreciation to those States which have supported its work and facilitated the organization of events held under the Committee's auspices by providing venues and participating in the debates. The Committee believes that, in the light of the new situation and the responsive position of the Committee reflected in its programme of work, the time has come for all States to recognize the valuable contribution that it can make as a forum for dialogue, analysis, exchange of expertise, mobilization of public opinion and action in support of the peace efforts and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as well as their socio-economic development. The Committee considers that a broadening of its membership, to include countries that support its objectives but have not hitherto participated in its work, would greatly enhance the contribution of the General Assembly to promote peace at this important stage.

88. The Committee considers that its seminars on economic and social issues confronting Palestinians in the occupied territories have been particularly useful in bringing together experts in the relevant fields, including Palestinians and Israelis, as well as donor countries, United Nations departments, agencies and organizations, non-governmental organizations active in the field and others. In this regard, the Committee has noted the suggestion made by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1994/29 of 27 July 1994 regarding the convening of a seminar on Palestinian administrative, managerial and financial needs and challenges in the light of the new developments. Also, in the light of the new situation created on the ground by the signing of the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles and Interim Self-Government Arrangements and the subsequent implementation agreements, and noting the recognized need for continued United Nations involvement in the question of Palestine, the Committee is of the view that consideration should be given to the holding of an event in the territory under the Palestinian Authority to address aspects of the transition period.

89. The Committee also stresses the value of its role as a catalyst in bringing together and developing a network of non-governmental organizations interested in the question of Palestine and in promoting solidarity activities, as well as concrete assistance. The Committee intends to continue to promote the positive contribution of the non-governmental organization constituency to meet the humanitarian and development needs of the Palestinian people during the transitional period, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority. Noting with appreciation the increasing interest and participation of Governments, particularly donor countries, and United Nations organizations and agencies in non-governmental organization events organized under its auspices, the Committee intends to continue its programme of meetings in the various regions in the coming year. The Committee will continue to seek to structure these meetings for maximum usefulness and to cooperate with coordinating committees for non-governmental organizations with a view to developing effective follow-up mechanisms. In order to encourage a wider and more active participation by non-governmental organizations in the activities and meetings under its auspices, in particular those whose work encompasses humanitarian ends and programmes, including development, benefiting the Palestinian people, the Committee established a revised set of criteria for such participation.

90. The Committee emphasizes the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine. The Committee requests the Division to continue its programme of publications, in consultation with the Committee, and to pay particular attention to preparing studies or updating existing ones, on the various issues which are subject to final status negotiations. The Committee notes that the United Nations computer-based information system on the question of Palestine (UNISPAL) being established in the Division will store information on the relevant activities of the United Nations system and the non-governmental organization network, as well as other information material, including documents related to the peace process. The Committee further notes the positive interest and response generated by the establishment of UNISPAL and calls for the provision of the necessary resources by the Secretary-General and for cooperation by all concerned with the Division for Palestinian Rights in order to make the system fully operational and to maximize its usefulness to all users.

91. The Committee continues to consider that the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information is very

useful in raising the awareness of the international community concerning the complexities of the question and the situation in the Middle East in general. The Committee believes that the Programme is contributing effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process. The Programme should continue along this path until a just solution to the question of Palestine is achieved in accordance with international legality. The Programme should follow and reflect realities related to the new experiences of the Palestinian people, provide assistance in the field of Palestinian media development and continue to disseminate information about the just cause of the Palestinian people, in addition to continuing its support of dialogue in the effort to build peace. During its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/158 C by an overwhelming majority. It is the Committee's hope that this year, in the light of the new situation, the Assembly will be able to adopt the resolution on the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine by consensus.

92. The Committee will continue to strive to achieve maximum effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate and to adjust its work programme in the light of developments, in order to continue to contribute, to the extent possible, to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

Notes

1/ Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/1 of 22 September 1992, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) did not participate in the work of the Committee.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/31/35).

3/ Ibid., Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/32/35); ibid., Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/33/35); ibid., Thirty-fourth Session Supplement No. 35 (A/34/35 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/35/35); ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/36/35); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/37/35 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/38/35); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/39/35); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/40/35); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/41/35); ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/42/35); ibid., Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/43/35); ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/44/35); ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/45/35); ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/46/35); ibid., Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/47/35); and ibid., Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/48/35).

4/ Ibid., Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/48/35), paras. 5-8.

5/ Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, No. 973.

6/ The observers at the Committee meetings were as follows: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Palestine, represented by the

Palestine Liberation Organization, as the representative of the Palestinian people, was also an observer.

7/ The membership of the Working Group was as follows: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Guinea, Guyana, India, Malta, Pakistan, Senegal, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Palestine, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the representative of the people directly concerned.

8/ S/1994/223, annex.

9/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 4 (E/1994/24), chap. II, sect. A.

10/ S/1994/233, annex.

11/ S/1994/239, annex.

12/ S/1994/275, annex.

13/ E/1994/34 (Part II)-E/ICEF/1994/13.

14/ See E/1994/96.

15/ A/AC.183/L.2/Add.14.